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**Title:** Need to increase duty on imported sugar-Laid.

SHRIBALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL (AHMEDNAGAR): I would like to draw the Government's attention towards the news item captioned "Finance Minister rejects proposal to increase import duty on sugar" which appeared in the 'The Indian Express' of 21 November, 1998. Sir, sugar import is under Open General Licence. So, naturally, sugar will be imported by the traders as long as imported sugar is cheaper than the Indian sugar. The Minister of Finance rejected the request from Minister of Food to increase the import duty substantially so that the Indian import of sugar may be competitive. This step may be a protection for Indian sugar industry, and farmers in particular.

I do agree that sweetening agents always give a boost for inflation. It is not fair to reduce inflation by importing sugar at the cost of Indian farmers. I, therefore, strongly appeal to the Minister of Finance that the Government may increase the duty on imported sugar. In the world market, a number of other countries are imposing higher import duties to protect their domestic industry and farmers. So, I would appeal to the Government that the issue should be reconsidered and the import duty on sugar may be increased substantially and justice should be done to the Indian farming community immediately.